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RELG 249 Medical Ethics

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I have adhered to the Honor Code for this assignment.

I chose the article from Margaret A. Farley, “Issues in Contemporary Christian Ethics: The Choice of Death in a Medical Context.” As an active member of the Catholic Sisters of Mercy, Farley focused on active and passive euthanasia in the termination period. Farley structured arguments over past famous arguments and logic that Catholics built over centuries. However, she did not forget to balance religious morals and society, especially public policy. She revealed that Catholic ethics have the capability for euthanasia to some extent.

At the beginning of the article, Farley makes a critical argument for the value of life. Everything follows arguing about life. Thus, it is wise that she made her standpoint clear first. She wrote, “human life is a fundamental good, there is a second: Life is not an absolute good, not the supreme value for humans.”¹ Life itself is fundamentally good, not absolute. Because there are many examples in the Bible and Augustine’s theory about war and the death penalty, life could not be absolute. Then, Farley makes a strong argument about euthanasia. Farley wrote, “choices for death may be more easily justified when they are choices to let a life go, under circumstances in which the burdens of preserving life outweigh the benefits (for the one who is dying); and when the hastening of death is the secondary and not directly intended result of reasoned decisions to provide positive remedies for pain.”²

¹ Margaret Farley, “Issues in Contemporary Christian Ethics: The Choice of Death in a Medical Context,” 419

² Farley, 423

Farley also hired the secular perspective. She argued that choices for death are the issue that society faces so that common sense of morality matters. Since the decision in the medical area might affect policies and directly affect our lives, she emphasized the importance of discussion based on different perspectives, including Catholicism. Toward the end of the essay, she made her point. “Human life has profound value, it is even holy. It therefore deserves utter respect. Yet death may sometimes be welcomed-if it is welcomed in a way that does not ignore or violate the requirement to respect and to value each person.”³

I highly evaluate Farley’s essay because of two distinctive features. First, Farley provided no ‘correct’ answer from her position. Even though she is Catholic, she provided contrasting arguments within Catholicism and in secular society. In addition, contrary to my first point, she emphasized the value of human life from Catholic, Biblical reasoning. It helped Farley and me to think about the questions around euthanasia from one shared perspective. Because of my background as a Jehovah’s Witnesses, her reasoning is easily acceptable and thus fosters flexibility in my thought process.

Farley gave me the fact that the argument of euthanasia is, at least, not the ultimate choice. Practicing active and passive euthanasia is the choice of dead and alive. However, the moral argument is not, and should not be, right or wrong. It is a question for all of us as members of society, so a discussion involving every perspective is necessary to protect dignity at death.

³ Farley, 429

Bibliography

Margaret Farley, "Issues in Contemporary Christian Ethics: The Choice of Death in a Medical Context," 417-429